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AUTHOR Parker, Franklin
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ABSTRACT

Major changes in China since Mao Tse-tung's death in 1976 include development of a more aggressive foreign policy, easing of political and social controls, and educational expansion. Specifically, China is providing economic aid to other developing nations, permitting debate on political issues, allowing modification of government directives at grass roots levels, and cautiously permitting a new openness. The new openness in education is characterized by allowing university students to study abroad for the first time since the 1930s, reinstating national exams for university entrance, advancing students according to their academic achievement, and giving high priority to building an educational system to effectively serve everyone from toddlers to senior citizens. All levels of Chinese education integrate education for work, citizenship, and character development. Special emphasis is placed on the work ethic and students are encouraged to work part-time on commercial products and spend part of each school year on a work study project. The conclusion is that China's major educational objective at present is to allocate the resources necessary to elevate China's education system into first rank among advanced nations. (DB)

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Franklin Parker
Benedum Professor of Education
602 Allen Hall, Evansdale Campus
West Virginia University
Morgantown, WV 26506

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# CHINA SINCE MAO *

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Franklin Parker

Dramatic changes in China since Chairman Mao Tse-tung's death on September 9, 1976, include, externally, a great foreign policy leap, internally, an easing of control and significant educational expansion. Mao's successor, Chairman Hua Kuo-feng, felt secure enough to leave China in August 1978, two years after wresting leadership in a power struggle, to launch new foreign policy moves designed to limit Soviet expansion. Sino-Soviet enmity has deepened since 1960 when differences first emerged over the direction of world communism. Clashes on their 3,000-mile border have since threatened to unleash massed troops each side has in readiness. Each side has jockeyed for foreign alliances to gain advantage over the other.

In this context, Hua chose the 10th anniversary of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia (August 1968) to urge Yugoslavia to continue on its separate path toward communism and to urge the same on Romania, which would also like to deviate. Hua also assured oil-rich, internally troubled but anti-communist Iran of China's help in case of Soviet encroachment. Chinese overtures to states ringing the Soviet colossus were matched by a mutual aid treaty signed with Japan and cemented by Vice Premier Teng Hsia-ping's visit to Tokyo in October 1978. In effect, the world's most populous country and Asia's most industrialized country have agreed to keep the USSR out of the Far East and also to exchange China's crude oil for loans,

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trade, and especially Japanese technology which China needs to achieve its stated objective of becoming a modern nation by the year 2000.

China has deliberately sought the Japanese model of industrialization. Japan is the offspring of Chinese colonists to those islands about 200 B.C. who supplanted an ancient race that survives today as the primitive Ainu tribe. Japan borrowed its written language and many cultural traditions from China. When 18th and 19th century science and technology materially elevated the West, China spurned its example and crumbled into factionalism and revolution. Japan, on the other hand, under the enlightened Meiji emperors from 1868, accepted the western model. In a quarter century it became a modern nation, powerful enough to defeat Russia in 1905.

Japan is efficient and enterprising, but not to tainted by the rugged individualism which China finds distasteful in the West. Japan builds modern factories but still retains much of its traditional culture. Japan offers economic vitality without the enormous wage differences of the U.S.A. Japan has bullet-fast trains but still respects its senior citizens.

If China has far to go and quickly to match USA and USSR gross national product by 2000 A.D., it is also interesting to recall that in less than 40 years China has, for the first time in its over 4,000 years of recorded history, achieved these minor miracles:

--fed, housed, and clothed some 900 million people, although only 11% of its land is capable of growing food;

--exploded more than a dozen nuclear devices and launched space vehicles;

--produced in its own factories jet planes, submarines, tanks, missiles, and other weapons, along with cars, trucks, and big farm and roadbuilding equipment; and

--given sizeable and growing economic aid to other developing countries, thus becoming a leading model for the Third World.

China's most dramatic internal change has been to end the chaotic revolutionary excesses of the Cultural Revolution, 1966-76, now blamed on Mao's widow, Chiang Ching, and her three principal colleagues, now under house arrest and downgraded as the bad "Gang of Four."

China is cautiously permitting a new openness, some encouragement of debate, and even modification at the grass-roots levels of mass line orders from above. While not yet a full throwback to the short-lived "Let a Hundred Flowers Bloom" freedom of some 20 years ago, the wide reprinting in full in 1978 of Mao's old essay stressing Democratic Centralism (i.e., encouraging local initiative and experiment in carrying out national objectives) puts the stamp of Chairman Mao's belated approval on the cautious easing of China's hitherto tightly controlled society.

The most important change in China's new "openness" is in the field of education. For the first time in some 40 years China has sent graduate students to study abroad. The way was prepared by the July 1978 visit to China of White House Science Advisor Frank Press and the August 1978 visit to the U.S. of a Chinese education delegation headed by Peking University's president (sponsored by the National Science Foundation). Under the agreement, the first Chinese students enrolled in the fall of 1978 at Stanford University, the University of California at Berkeley, and elsewhere. The program is expected to grow and is being duplicated in Japan and several European

countries. Half a century ago, some foreign-educated Chinese students including Chou En-lai, helped bring about the Chinese Revolution and win communist victory. Even Mao, like Chou En-lai, wanted to study in France, but Mao was inept with the French language and so remained in China.

A national examination for university entrance was restored in 1977, after a long hiatus. During the Cultural Revolution not only were university entrance exams suspended, but schools and universities were closed so that student Red Guard units could harass officials who allegedly took the "capitalist road." Then it was deemed more important to be doctrinally "red" than academically "expert." Now, the most important universities will get first choice at the brightest 30% of students. The other 400 universities will choose from the remainder of students in the top 30%. Most secondary school leavers (70%) will go directly to work (China still employs 85% of its labor force in rural communes), but young workers, along with their older colleagues, will have some educational opportunities in below university-level practical and part-time "factory universities" and "commune colleges." The plan is to allow students to begin school at age 6, a year earlier than at present. By 1985 all children in urban areas are to have ten years of schooling, ages 6-16, and eight years of schooling in rural areas, ages 6-14.

China's long road ahead educationally in order to achieve modern nation status is indicated by the seemingly low level and poor quality of its presently organized school system.. Since every able-bodied adult must work and there is a preponderance of working mothers, China has many day nurseries serving children from soon after birth

until they are about 2½ years old. Besides receiving physical care, the children are taught to be cooperative members of the peer group in work and play and to respect adult authority.

Kindergartens, enrolling children from ages 2½ to 6, furnish physical care, development, hygiene, language, simple math, "common knowledge" (consisting of general science and geography), and "political education" (consisting of history, economics, and Marxian politics). Common knowledge and political education are sequential from kindergarten through primary school. Kindergarten also continues cooperative training in working with others to "serve the people," and in respecting constituted authority.

The 5-year primary school, enrolling children from ages 7-12, offers reading, writing, language arts, math, common knowledge, political education, art, singing, and some kind of practical work experience. After school ends at 3 p.m., most children attend a Children's Palace where they carry on such extracurricular activities as orchestra, band, chorus, dancing, art, sports, and hobbies. Children's Palace supervisors are professionals but adult leaders or teachers are volunteers.

Secondary schools, called middle schools, consist of 2-year junior middle school, ages 12-14, and senior middle school, ages 15-17. Primary schooling is universal, and most urban areas have junior middle schools; but not all rural areas have senior middle schools. About 20% of the 17-year-olds graduate from senior middle school; the U.S.A. achieved that level about 1925. Only about 2% of the college-age group attend China's universities; the U.S.A. achieved that level about 1890. Besides universities, China has technical

institutes, teachers' colleges, agricultural schools, opera schools, and schools for acrobats. Opera and acrobatics are very popular spectator amusements. There are also "people's universities," providing short courses to improve work performance, plus continuing political education, and "lifelong learning."

Indeed, Chinese education has far to go, and quickly, to achieve modern nation status. But Chinese schools and Chinese society have some unusual characteristics that must be considered. First, the new pragmatic leaders have given high priority to building quickly an effective education system to serve everyone from toddlers to the retired. Finding resources to support ambitious educational plans has top priority. Secondly, like the USSR, China strongly connects formal education with after-school, out-of-school, and vacation time. The Children's Palaces, the Youth Palaces, and Harvest Brigades are all additive to formal schools. In contrast, in the U.S.A. only a small minority participate in less comparable and less organized Boy and Girl Scouts, 4-H Clubs, and other youth-serving organizations. Thirdly, probably even more thoroughly than does the USSR or any other nation, China integrates education for work, for citizenship, and character. The work ethic is heavily emphasized. Banners everywhere exhort people to "Study, Work, and Serve the People."

The importance of work is stressed in fables told kindergarten children. They are taught to serve each other in various group activities. From primary grades onward, children work part-time on some commercial product which is actually sold. This activity develops respect for daily work and its contribution to society, aids understanding of the division of labor, shows how people with different

skills are needed to increase production, and enables children to discover the satisfaction of doing work for "the people."

In the upper primary grades and in middle schools, students also work nine weeks a year, spending three weeks each on farms, factories, and in the army (the huge People's Liberation Army consists of citizen-soldiers, similar to the U.S.A. National Guard), making them familiar with peasants, factory workers, and soldiers, thus curbing elitism and making real the slogan, "Serve the People."

Formal educational systems in the U.S.A. and the West generally evolved when sharp social and political stratification existed, when ruling class youths received liberal education and working class youths received mainly manual training. Because of this historic division, in the more egalitarian post-World War II period, the U.S.A. and other western countries have tried but not fully succeeded in integrating occupational and general education. Witness the recent effort and money spent on "career education" in the U.S.A.. The Chinese, on the other hand, seem to integrate more smoothly education for work and citizenship in a single curriculum.

Besides education for work and citizenship, Chinese education also integrates morality, as morality is conceived by Chinese Communist thought: loving one's country, serving others, abiding by the decision of one's group, and respecting constituted authority. Also, national educational policy in China responds more rapidly to changing political priorities than is true in the democratic West. When doctrinal redness was extolled over academic expertness, schools quickly lined up behind that policy. Now, realizing the need for scientists, mathematicians, technologists, and other academic experts,

the Central Committee has given out the order to resume university entrance exams and to advance students according to their academic achievement. Few western nations have been able to implement two more divergent educational aims one after the other in so short a time. We have yet to see if Chinese education is malleable enough and China's resources vast enough to elevate the world's most populous country educationally into first rank among advanced nations.